

## State eyes area water- County must share, Garamendi tells officials

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*Lauren McSherry, Staff Writer*

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As the state wrestles with what could be a years-long water crisis, Lt. Gov. John Garamendi had some grave words for public officials from across San Bernardino County on Thursday. He told them that the county's plentiful underground water supplies will need to be shared with the rest of California in the future.

"We're going to have to be a community to solve this problem," Garamendi said at the second annual San Bernardino County Water Conference, held in Ontario. "We cannot just have our community or region in mind. We are going to have to think broader."

About 450 people attended the conference, including business leaders, developers and representatives from cities and water districts in Chino, Ontario, Upland, Fontana, San Bernardino, Rancho Cucamonga, Highland, Victorville and Apple Valley, among others.

Garamendi said a "pending disaster" has arrived, involving shrinking reservoirs, periodic droughts and diminishing snowpack in the Sierra Nevada - all a result of global climate change that is impacting the state water supply.

The problem has been compounded by a judge's order dramatically cutting the water channeled to Southern California from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

Garamendi called the county's water basins "an extraordinary asset" and said the water districts managing the underground reservoirs will play a central role in deciding how they are used. He also said money could be made available to clean up contaminated basins in the county.

"These basins are so important in overall planning that we cannot ignore them," Garamendi said.

The conference focused on collaboration between land developers, businesses and municipalities to meet growing water demands. State legislation requires that developers prove that adequate water supplies exist before housing projects can be approved.

That requirement along with estimates that the county's population is expected to grow by 20 percent by 2015 have fostered concerns that dwindling water supplies could hurt economic growth in the county.

Kirby Brill, general manager of the Mojave Water Agency, one of the county's major water providers, spoke with optimism of meeting Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's goal to reduce per capita water use by 20 percent by 2020.

In June, the governor declared the state officially in drought. Rebates and incentives to replace lawns with drought-tolerant plants and to install water-conserving fixtures in houses is having an impact in the district, Brill said.

"These numbers to us are not scary," Brill said. "They are doable, and they are essential."

Paul Biane, Board of Supervisors chairman, urged cooperation among all stakeholders.

"We all need to work from the same playbook," Biane said. "By working as a team, we can solve the county's challenges."